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Letter dated 14 August 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would like to draw your attention that on 4 August 2012 a group of Iranian pilgrims were kidnapped on their way to the Damascus Airport by armed men belonging to the so-called "Free Syrian Army". The captors claimed that of the 48 Iranian pilgrims abducted, three were killed.

The timing of this unfortunate occurrence is similar to that of previous cases in which a number of Iranian pilgrims and civil servants were kidnapped. As a result of international efforts, some of the captives were released. However, some Iranian engineers and pilgrims are still being held by their kidnappers.

The Islamic Republic of Iran lodges its strong condemnation of such inhumane and criminal acts of indiscriminate killing and abduction of innocent people and holds the hostage-takers responsible for any loss of lives or injury that may occur to the hostages.

I would like to convey the deep concern of my Government, as well as the families of the pilgrims, over the security and safety of these hostages. Since using the hostages as human shields violates international law and the human rights of these innocent civilians, it is expected that the Security Council will condemn, in the strongest terms, the inhumane act of hostage-taking and take urgent and effective steps towards securing their release.

I would appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Eshagh **Al Habib**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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